



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Shana Jones, Special Assistant
Daryl Fields, Public Information Officer
(210) 384-7440

May 4, 2004

SAN ANTONIO MAN INDICTED ON BANK ROBBERY/FIREARM CHARGES

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced today that a federal grand jury in Austin, Texas, indicted 44 year-old Ernest Rodriguez, Jr., of San Antonio, Texas, on five counts of bank robbery and one count of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

The indictment alleges that Rodriguez robbed five different Austin banks: Bank of America at 3900 North IH-35 on February 21, 2004; Bank of America at 9701 Research Boulevard on March 3, 2004; Travis County Credit Union at 1101 IH-35 North on March 9, 2004; Wells Fargo Bank at 3221 Red River Street on April 4, 2004; and the Liberty Bank at 8770 Research Boulevard on April 5, 2004. The indictment also alleges that on March 24, 2004, Rodriguez, a convicted felon, was in possession of a Browning .380 semi-automatic pistol. His criminal history includes a 1994 conviction and eight-year sentence for theft and possession of heroin in Bexar County, Texas.

On April 14, 2004, Rodriguez was arrested by Austin police detectives after leaving the Travis County Credit Union, where he was recognized by one of the bank tellers as the same man who robbed the bank a month earlier. He remains in custody.

If convicted, Rodriguez faces up to 20 years imprisonment per bank robbery count and up to ten years imprisonment on the felon in possession charge.

This case resulted from an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Austin Police Department, Texas Department of Public Safety, San Antonio Police Department and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. This investigation continues. Assistant United States Attorney Gerald C. Carruth is prosecuting this case on behalf of the government.

The prosecution of this case is another example of how the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Texas is implementing the Department of Justice's gun crime initiative - Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN). Project Safe Neighborhoods is a nationwide federal initiative designed to reduce gun violence in our communities. PSN promotes partnerships among federal, state, and local law enforcement to target criminals in possession of guns. Federal law insures that when an armed criminal is arrested, that individual will face swift criminal prosecution and be exiled from the community through the use of stiff mandatory prison sentences.

An indictment is a formal accusation of criminal conduct, not evidence of guilt. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until convicted through due process of law.

#####